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Charting a course for the CIA

SECRECY AND DEMOCRACY
The CIA in Transition
By Stansfield Turner. Houghton Mifflin. 304 pp. $16.95.

By Lyman B. Kirkpatrick Jr.

Among those who have headed the Central Intelligence Agency to date, Stansfield Turner's name will survive as the most controversial. His predecessors include such luminaries as four-star Gen. Walter Bedell Smith (Eisenhower's Chief of Staff during World War II); Allen Welsh Dulles, whose brother was then the secretary of state; George Bush, now the vice president of the United States. The incumbent, William Casey, was a prominent attorney and former head of major federal agencies. Including all the directors who preceded Turner, there were admirals, generals, lawyers, businessmen, career intelligence officers and a government specialist.

When President Jimmy Carter appointed Admiral Turner to head the Central Intelligence Agency, he was looking for a tough man to take on a thankless job. Turner, who is not shy about speaking bluntly, demonstrated it on that occasion. He told the president he would prefer to be named the vice chief of naval operations so that he could be appointed to the top uniformed position in the Navy the next year when the incumbent chief of naval operations would retire. The president said he did not want him for that job, but he did want him to head the intelligence community. The intelligence community, in addition to CIA, includes the Defense Intelligence Agency, the National Security Agency, the Intelligence and Research Office of the Department of State and the intelligence staffs of the military services.

Turner agreed, but obviously may not have been fully aware of the bureaucratic minefields and torpedos into which he was sailing. However, in the tradition of the military, he had no worries about being able to handle the job. To say that he is supremely confident is an understatement. Now he has written a commentary on what he found at CIA and in the other intelligence agencies. He also lists 11 "Agenda Actions" recommending what he believes should be done to improve US intelligence.

Stansfield Turner possesses impressive credentials for the job he was called to fill: head of the Central Intelligence Agency and leader of the so-called US intelligence community – all those organizations engaged in finding out what is going on in the rest of the world. A native of Highland Park, Ill., he attended Amherst College for two years, graduated from the Naval Academy in 1946. He was selected as a Rhodes Scholar and received a master's degree from Oxford University for studies in philosophy, politics and economics.

Turner's career in the Navy was helped along by Adm. Elmo Zumwalt, who became chief of naval operations in 1970. Zumwalt first assigned Turner to command an aircraft carrier task group in the Mediterranean and then recalled him to Washington to head the Navy's Office of Systems Analysis. Turner says Zumwalt dubbed him "his resident S.O.B." After a year in Washington, Turner was assigned as president of the Naval War College in Newport. "I changed the curriculum from a passive program, where students were lectured to most of the time, to one where they were actively involved in serious reading, writing and critical analysis of ideas. This upset many students and some of the faculty. . ." (At the time, Turner was president of the Naval War College, I was a professor at Brown University in Providence. I had lectured and given elective courses at the Naval War College for many years. Turner did indeed change the War College!)

From the War College, the admiral went to command the 2d Fleet in the Atlantic, after which he was promoted to four-star rank. On Feb. 2, 1977, he was summoned to see the president and learned that his future was in CIA.

The book he has written about the CIA is worthy of being a required text in civics and government classes of schools and colleges. If one can forgive the big "I" and overlook the fact that he was "not present at the creation" and that other CIA directors took actions worthy of praise, it is well worth reading.

The biggest problem with Turner's book is that it is so self-serving. One inevitably tires of the big "I." However, his accomplishments far outweigh his arrogance. If the reader takes a dose of tranquilizers, the book can assist in an understanding of how the United States tries to use its intelligence agencies to discover and analyze world problems.

The importance of the CIA should not be underestimated. That organization, its career professionals and its directors, as well as the policy makers of the executive branch deserve the support (and prayers) of all Americans. If they are correct, we all benefit; if wrong, this nation and perhaps the entire planet may suffer.

The admiral concludes his book with what he calls "The Agenda for Action." He lists 11 recommended changes. One is to convince the intelligence community that good oversight is essential to effective intelligence. In my 20 years of US intelligence service, I knew of only a very small minority who resisted inspection and review. They may have been clever, but they were not wise and, in more than one instance, were "hoist with their own petard." It seems obvious, but those who are "overseers" cannot be the intelligence collectors or analysts or it would be a meaningless introspection.

He urges that analysis be improved. There is nothing on this planet that cannot be improved.

Turner suggests broadening the analytic effort beyond current events and Soviet military events. CIA's activities are controlled by what the president wants and Congress will fund. CIA is constructing another giant building, so additional effort obviously is planned.

He would separate the role of director of Central Intelligence from that of head of the Central Intelligence Agency. Stansfield Turner held the two jobs, as does William Casey today, as did former directors. The proposal is as old as the US intelligence system. The head of CIA can use the vast